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U.N. REFORMS RESISTED BY MANY WHO PAY LITTLE IN U.N. DUES

U.S. envoy Bolton tells Senate panel 120 nations oppose reform

By David Anthony Denny
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Needed management reforms in the United Nations are being resisted by more than 120 U.N. members who, collectively, provide relatively little budget support to the institution, Ambassador John Bolton says. The U.S. representative to the United Nations testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee May 25 on U.N. reform. Reform efforts, he said, have not yet proven very successful.

The United States, Bolton said, is one of a group of about 50 nations that actively seeks management reform. This group contributes more than 86.7 percent of the entire U.N. budget. It is opposed by more than 120 nations who provide only about 12 percent of the budget, he said. Included in this latter group are many members of the Group of 77 (G-77), whom Bolton said "are resisting efforts by the Secretariat to reform and streamline basic managerial structures and practices."

The G-77 describes itself as "the largest Third World coalition in the United Nations." Its stated goal is to give the developing world the ability to articulate and promote its collective economic interests and enhance its negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues in the U.N. system.

Bolton told the committee that the G-77 wrote to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan the week of May 15 "chastising him for issuing reports to the public on his proposals for some reforms he feels [are] necessary." The U.S. view, in contrast, is that the U.N. Charter designates the secretary-general as the agency's chief administrative officer, and all member states should support his fulfillment of that responsibility.

Nevertheless, Bolton cited some small successes in the reform effort. Most important was the successful effort in December 2005 to cap spending on the U.N.'s current two-year budget, given lack of progress on the reform effort. He said the spending cap should be reached in July, and that should allow an evaluation of "progress to date and to determine whether, and in what form, further spending should be authorized."

The creation of a U.N. Peacebuilding Commission and Support Office is another success, though a modest one, Bolton said. The United States has agreed that this entity should be funded with existing resources.

Consequently, member states created an office that Bolton said comprises "predominately reprogrammed positions." Even the few newly created positions, he said, are being funded out of the current budget and therefore require no additional financing.

RELEASING GUANTANAMO DETAINEES WOULD ENDANGER WORLD, U.S. SAYS

State Department legal adviser discusses human-rights concerns in webchat

By Vince Crawley
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, does not violate international law, and releasing detainees would allow dangerous combatants to target innocent civilians worldwide, the State Department's legal adviser told a global Internet audience during a May 25 webchat.

In many cases, enemy fighters captured on battlefields in Afghanistan have broken no American laws and could not be tried in civil courts, yet they continue to pose a severe wartime danger, said John B. Bellinger III, the senior legal adviser to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In the webchat, Bellinger stressed that it has been common practice throughout the history of warfare to hold enemy fighters in custody until hostilities end. Approximately 460 detainees were being held in Guantanamo as of May 18, the most recent date for which numbers were available, the Pentagon has said. Approximately 290 detainees have been released from Guantanamo -- either set free or turned over to the custody of another government.

Bellinger said the U.S. government "does not believe that any detainee at Guantanamo Bay has been subjected to torture." He did acknowledge isolated cases in which Americans have illegally abused people being held in U.S. custody, but he said those cases have been dealt with in the American legal system, with 89 service members convicted in courts-martial.

"We are aware that some critics have alleged that the detention of detainees for a long period without trial ... amounts to psychological torture," Bellinger said. "We do not agree. ... [I]n any armed conflict, the enemy combatants of the opposing side are held until the end of the conflict. It may be stressful, but that does not make it torture, and it does not mean that it is illegal."

Bellinger led a team of more than two-dozen senior U.S. officials to Geneva May 5-8 to present oral and written reports to the U.N. Committee Against Torture. The exhaustive U.S. presentation included more than 200 pages of written answers to questions that centered on the conduct of U.S. detention operations around the world. In a State Department news conference May 19, Bellinger said the U.N. committee's report, issued that day, apparently ignored many of the documents submitted by U.S. officials.

"The U.N. Committee did call for the closure of Guantanamo Bay, because the Committee was concerned about the length of detention of the detainees," Bellinger said in the May 25 webchat. "The U.S. Government believes that the United States is in an armed conflict with Al Qaida, and that in any armed conflict it is appropriate to hold detained combatants until the end of the conflict," Bellinger said.

“Holding enemy combatants until the end of the conflict does not constitute torture. This said, President Bush has said that he recognizes the concerns that have been raised about Guantanamo. He does not want to keep it open any longer than is necessary. However, there are many dangerous detainees in Guantanamo, who would pose a threat to the United States and other countries if they were released.”

It also is important to note what the chairman of the U.N. Committee Against Torture, Fernando Mariño Menendez of Spain, said when the committee report was released, Bellinger said. “He said that the Committee had concerns, but its report should not be blown out of proportion, because the United States has a good record on human rights,” Bellinger said.

Meeting with European journalists May 4 in Brussels, Belgium, Bellinger said the United States would welcome international suggestions on alternatives to the Guantanamo Bay facility.

In his webchat, he said he is not aware of any examples in the history of warfare where “a detaining power has given criminal trials to the combatants it has detained (unless of course the prisoners have also committed war crimes).” Instead, enemy fights have been held until the end of hostilities. “We are also not aware,” he said, “of cases where the detaining power has simply released large numbers of enemy combatants during the course of the conflict.”

Roughly 10 percent of the hundreds of individuals who have been released from Guantanamo “have returned to fighting us in Afghanistan,” Bellinger said.

Some critics have called for criminal trials instead of indefinite detention for those being held at Guantanamo. But Bellinger said trials are not practical in many cases. “We do not believe that the detainees are simply criminals who were captured by police and who must be given criminal trials,” he said.

Many detainees were captured by U.S. or coalition forces in Afghanistan, and “in most cases they did not violate U.S. laws when they traveled from their home countries to train in acts of terrorism in Al Qaida training camps,” Bellinger said. “But does the fact that they did not violate existing U.S. criminal laws mean that they did nothing wrong and should be released? We think not. We believe that they were combatants who were fighting us in an armed conflict.”

Bellinger added, “The United States is absolutely committed to human rights, to the rule of law, and to compliance with our international law obligations, and we believe we are acting in compliance with our obligations in holding detainees in Guantanamo.”

He also addressed concerns in Europe about reports of alleged secret CIA flights carrying detainees.

The practice of transporting a detainee from one country to another is known as rendition. Bellinger said that the U.S. government “has for decades conducted renditions on infrequent occasions when necessary to bring terror suspects to justice in the United States or to return them to their home countries or other countries where they are wanted.”

Alleged CIA flights have been reported widely in European media.

“The vast majority of allegations about renditions are simply untrue,” Bellinger said. The U.S. government has “given serious consideration to attempting to deny the many allegations that are untrue,” he said. “We have concluded, regretfully, that it is simply not appropriate or possible to deny every inaccurate allegation.”

UNITED STATES, IAEA URGE IRAN TO RESOLVE NUCLEAR STANDOFF

Iran’s program must come into compliance with international community’s requests

By David McKeeby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Iran’s leaders must engage diplomatically to prove to the international community that its civil energy program is not a covert effort to develop nuclear weapons, say Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Mohammed ElBaradei.

“We’ve talked about Iran and how to bring into being compliance with the Board of Governors resolution that was passed and also the presidential statement that was passed in the Security Council that asks Iran to rapidly

comply with the international community's demands," Rice told reporters following a May 24 meeting with ElBaradei at the State Department.

ElBaradei said that he briefed Rice on a recent meeting with Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator. "I'm an honest broker," said ElBaradei, describing the United Nations' role in the negotiating progress, "I listen to all the parties. I bring their different perspectives to each other.

"I believe that it's very important for Iran to take whatever measures are required for the international community to have confidence that its program is peaceful in nature," he added.

Rice and ElBaradei also reported progress at the May 24 meeting in London of representatives from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (the United Kingdom, the United States, China, France and Russia) and Germany to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue.

"I believe that they are now prepared to talk about the progress that they've made and perhaps to return these ideas to capitals for further consideration," Rice said.

The Rice-ElBaradei discussions also covered ways to draw India constructively into ongoing international non-proliferation efforts. Rice said the existing concept of the nonproliferation regime has to be broadened now "in order to deal with anomalies like the Indian situation."

U.S. AIDS INITIATIVE IS GOOD PARTNERSHIP WITH RWANDANS

Defense Department has stake in new prevention, treatment programs

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff Writer

Kigali, Rwanda -- The Rwandan army, respected for its efficiency, discipline and care of its troops, is expanding its HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs for soldiers and civilians with help from President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The United Nations reported in December 2005 that sub-Saharan, with 10 percent of the world's population, was home to 60 percent of all people living with HIV.

Although devastated by war and genocide, Rwanda has managed to cope with the disease and has an AIDS prevalence rate of under 4 percent, one of the lowest in Africa.

As a result of growing rates in other developing nations, President Bush announced an ambitious \$15 billion program in 2003, saying America never could have real security if the developing world was left to cope with the disease alone. More than a dozen countries have been targeted for PEPFAR support, including a number of African nations.

Before he left for the June 2005 Group of Eight Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, Bush told an audience in Washington, "We're making life-giving treatment possible for more than 230,000 adults and children in Africa. We're determined to reach our five-year goal of treating two million."

The president cited the importance of partnership, adding, "This effort [PEPFAR] is succeeding because America is providing resources and Africans are providing leadership."

Lieutenant Colonel John Ruffing, the U.S. Embassy defense attaché who oversees the PEPFAR program with the Rwandan military for the U.S. Department of Defense, also made that point.

"PEPFAR is a good program because it has allowed Rwandans to take a leadership role. Recently, they showed their program to members of the Burundian medical corps," he told the Washington File May 25.

Ruffing explained that PEPFAR is implemented by three main U.S. agencies, the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Defense Department. The latest PEPFAR effort with the Rwandan military involves a \$1.6 million grant.

The new effort has two components, he said. Prevention efforts are administered by Population Services International (PSI), a large health care nongovernmental organization based in Washington. Drew University in New Jersey runs the treatment programs.

On a visit to Kanombe Military Hospital in Kigali, Dr. Charles Murego, a civilian physician who works for the Rwandan military's Directorate of Medical Services, told the Washington File he was pleased with the partnership between Rwanda and the United States in the fight against AIDS.

The prevention phase of the new program, begun by PSI in fall 2005, has been "especially effective in changing behavior" and "risky habits," such as mixing alcohol with sex, frequenting sex workers and not using condoms.

"Most soldiers are young men and for them alcohol is a danger," he explained, because it lowers their inhibitions and makes them forget sex safety precautions.

As part of its PEPFAR funding, PSI is raising AIDS awareness and prevention among Rwanda's troops through novel devices like establishing anti-AIDS clubs in each brigade to bring peer support and peer pressure to bear.

PSI also plans to organize regular sports, theater and music competitions on AIDS-prevention subjects for members of the clubs to reinforce their adherence to the "ABCs" of AIDS prevention: Abstinence, Be faithful and appropriate use of Condoms.

Murego said he was excited about the Drew University effort, which started recently but has the potential for improving care for his military patients, families and civilians who come down with the disease.

"I would especially like to get more up-to-date testing and laboratory facilities," Murego said. As it stands now, he said testing is a lengthy process and more modern lab equipment would make it easier for him to adjust the combination of treatment drugs to fit individuals' needs and tolerances.

Pleases Note: Most texts and transcript mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/>

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